Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 05100 200818Z
ACTION SS-25

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----------008747 200819Z /20
O 200732Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4597

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5100

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, KS, US
SUBJECT: KOREAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL.

FOR GLEYSTEEN FROM AMBASSADOR

1. EVEN BEFORE PASSAGE OF SENATE RESOLUTION, I DISCUSSED WITH BOTH NDP LEADER YI CH'OL-SUNG AND PRIME MINISTER PROPOSED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION AND ROKG POSTURE IN FORTHCOMING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING. I URGED YI TO FOREGO TROOP WITHDRAWAL RESOLUTION AND TO BOTH SUGGESTED EMPHASIZING IMPLEMENTATION OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM SO AS NOT TO WEAKEN DEFENSES OF KOREA, WHICH IS STATED INTENTION OF PRESIDENT CARTER. YI, DESPITE MY IMPORTUNINGS, WAS ADAMANT ABOUT PUSHING AHEAD WITH ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION AS YOU WILL SEE IN SEPTEL MESSAGE ON PREPARATIONS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. PRIME MINISTER APPEARED UNPREPARED TO MOVE ON THIS ISSUE AND IN FACT WAS EXTREMELY NERVOUS ABOUT HIS ANTICIPATED ASSEMBLY APPEARANCES.

2. 2. ON JUNE 18 FOLLOWING SENATE RESOLUTION, I TALKED OVER PROBLEM WITH FONMIN PARK AND EMPHASIZED SENATE RESOLUTION WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT CHANGE US POLICY ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL. FONMIN RECOGNIZED QUITE REALISTICALLY THAT THIS WAS THE CASE. NEVERTHELESS, HE EXPECTS EVEN MORE HEATED AND DIFFICULT
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ASSEMBLY QUESTIONING ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL AS RESULT SENATE RESOLUTION, WHICH US PRESS REPORTS CONTINUE TO PORTRAY AS AT LEAST WARNING TO ADMINISTRATION. HE SAW VERY LITTLE PROSPECTS OF DISCOURAGING NATIONAL ASSEMMBLY RESOLUTION ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZING ROKG MUST LIVE WITH TROOP WITHDRAWAL DECISION.

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3. RE COMMENT PARA 2 REFTEL, I WOULD NOT CHARACTERIZE FOREIGN MINISTRY PERFORMANCE AT FIRST SESSION OF WORKING LEVEL DIPLOMATIC CONVERSATIONS AS "GRANDSTANDING." WHILE FOREIGN MINISTRY GETS FAIRLY LOW MARKS FROM US ON THEIR RECENT EFFORTS, THEIR PROBLEM IS BUREAUCRATICALLY TO DEMONSTRATE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND FONMIN PARK ARE PLAYING ACTIVE ROLE IN CONSULTATIONS ON ISSUE WHERE SUBSTANCE REALLY LIES WITH DEFENSE MINISTRY. IN ADDITION, FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS GENUINE CONCERN ABOUT DEMONSTRATING TO THE PUBLIC THAT PROCESS OF CONSULTATION IS MEANINGFUL, NOT PRO FORMA. HABIB/BROWN MISSION RECEIVED VERY HIGH MARKS FOR ENGAGING IN SUCH CONSULTATIONS AND I BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO CONTINUE TO PROJECT THIS POSTURE, WITHOUT OF COURSE LETTING KOREANS PULL OFF ANY END RUNS.

4. COMMENT: PROBLEM FACING PRESIDENT PARK AND ROKG WITH RESPECT TROOP WITHDRAWAL IS VERY DELICATE SHIFTING OF PUBLIC OPINION TO ACCEPTANCE THIS DECISION. WE HAVE CONSTANT REMINDERS OF DEPTH OF PUBLIC EMOTIONAL REACTION TO THIS DECISION AND OPPOSITION NDP IS ON VERY SOLID POLITICAL GROUND IN URGING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION. IF PRESIDENT PARK TOOK STANCE THAT PRESS AND ASSEMBLY SHOULD CEASE ALL OPPOSITION TO TROOP WITHDRAWAL, HE COULD BE ON VERY INSECURE POLITICAL GROUND. INSTEAD HE HAS ADOPTED POSTURE THAT WHILE PREFERRING US GROUND FORCES NOT BE WITHDRAWN, ROKG MUST ACCEPT AND LIVE WITH DECISION AND DEVELOP OWN RESOURCES AS WELL AS SECURING ADEQUATE US COMPENSATION TO PERMIT WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT RISK TO KOREAJS SECURITY. SCM WILL BE MOMENT OF TRUTH FOR PRESIDENT PARK AND ROKG SINCE JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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WHATEVER OTHER PUBLIC STEPS ARE TAKEN MUST INVOLVE ENDORSEMENT OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND JOINT MEASURES TO COMPENSATE FOR IT. UNTIL THEN, I DOUBT WHETHER ROKG WILL SQUASH ALL VOICES OF OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY WHEN DOUBTS ABOUT TROOP WITHDRAWAL CONTINUE TO BE EXPRESSED BY SOME CIRCLES IN WASHINGTON.
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